

Theory, Knowledge, Development and Politics:

What Role for the Academy
in the Sustainability of Africa?



EDITED BY

Munyaradzi Mawere &
Artwell Nhemachena

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Editors

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*Langaa Research & Publishing CIC
Mankon, Bamenda*

Publisher:
Langaa RPCIG
Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group
P.O. Box 902 Mankon
Bamenda
North West Region
Cameroon
E-mail: langaa@rpcig.net
www.langaa-rpcig.net

Distributed in and outside N. America by African Books Collective
orders@africanbookscollective.com
www.africanbookscollective.com

ISBN: 9956-763-64-0

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List of Contributors

Munyaradzi Mawere holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa. Professor Mawere also holds a Master's Degree in Social Anthropology from UCT, a Master's Degree in Philosophy and B. A. (Hons) Degree in Philosophy from the University of Zimbabwe. He is currently Professor in the Department of Culture and Heritage Studies at Great Zimbabwe University. Before joining this university, Professor Mawere was a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe and at Universidade Pedagógica, Mozambique, where he has worked in different capacities as a Senior lecturer, Assistant Research Director, Postgraduate Co-ordinator and Associate Professor. He has an outstanding publishing record of more than one hundred and twenty pieces of work which include more than twenty-five books and over a hundred book chapters and papers in scholarly journals. Professor Mawere has published extensively on poverty and community development, knowledge studies, political anthropology, science and technology studies (STS), environment and agrarian issues, democracy and African states, coloniality, decoloniality and transformation, African philosophy and political systems, culture and heritage studies. Some of his bestselling books are: *Humans, Other Beings and the Environment: Harurwa (Edible stinkbugs) and Environmental Conservation in South-eastern Zimbabwe* (2015); *Democracy, Good Governance and Development in Africa: A Search for Sustainable Democracy and Development*, (2015); *Culture, Indigenous Knowledge and Development in Africa: Reviving Interconnections for Sustainable Development* (2014); *Harnessing Cultural Capital for Sustainability: A Pan Africanist Perspective* (2015); *Divining the Future of Africa: Healing the Wounds, Restoring Dignity and Fostering Development* (2014); *African Cultures, Memory and Space: Living the Past Presence in Zimbabwean Heritage* (2014); *African Philosophy and Thought Systems: A Search for a Culture and Philosophy of Belonging* (2016); and *Colonial Heritage, Memory and Sustainability in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects* (2016).

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Chapter Fifteen

Impact of Religion on Socio-Political and Economic Development: A Case of Religious Crisis in China and Nigeria, 1990-2015

Lemuel Ekedegwa Odeh & Afolabi Opeyemi Glory

Introduction

China is a country located in East Asia, which has the largest population in the world (about 1.3 billion persons), while Nigeria is located in West Africa and it is the largest Africa Country with a population of about 160 million persons. Although, China and Nigeria are located on different continents, both countries have a lot of commonalities which have helped to strengthen their relationship which was established on 10th February, 1971. However, one unique similarity between both countries is the presence of religious conflict which pose great threats to the process of modernization and nation building going on in both countries. China and Nigeria have a profusion of religions which could have been used to foster socio-political and economic development in both countries, in that, religious value systems play very significant role in collective self-awareness and identity, which draw together individuals, families and regions, and pull them towards greater self-consciousness needed to build and animate a nation from within. However, religion is been manipulated by some unscrupulous elements in both countries, as an instrument of destruction and disintegration, which threatens the peace, stability and security of both countries.

Religious crisis in China and Nigeria can be attributed to the rise in the Islamic activism of the Uyghurs in China and Boko Haram sect in Nigeria from the 1990s up till 2015. The Uyghurs (who are the Turkic minority Muslim who live primarily in the Xinjiang region of Western China) have been perpetrating a lot of religious crisis as a result of religious restrictions and human rights abuses which they are subjected to by the Chinese government. Also, the Boko Haram

Islamic sect in North East Nigeria, carry out a lot of terrorist attack in the country because of their hatred for Western education and influence, which in their view, is responsible for the high rate of poverty in their region. Both the Uyghurs and Boko Haram adopt extreme measures to achieve their goals, which culminate in the loss of lives and properties.

Against this backdrop, this chapter seeks to look at the religion revival in China and Nigeria, noting specifically, the activities of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang China, and the Boko Haram in North East Nigeria. The linkages of these religious conflicts on the socio-political and economic development of China and Nigeria shall also be examined.

Conceptual Clarification

Religion

Several definitions of religion abound as a result of the variety of religious beliefs and organizations. In view of this, only the definition which portrays the essence of this work shall be conceptualized. Religion is a collection of cultural systems and views that establish symbols that relate humanity with spirituality and sometimes to moral values. Religion deals with shared beliefs and practices; it is predominantly social and is found universally in every society, from the most simple and isolated, to the most complex and urban. In all established societies, religion is one of the important institutional structures which constitute the total social system. It is a product of culture and an outgrowth of man's activities since man is the only culture bearing creature. Religion is a cultural tool which enables a man to accommodate himself to his experience and his environment (Adega, *et al*, 2009:59). H.L. Tisler conceptualizes religion as a system of beliefs, practices and philosophical values shared by a group of people (Okau, 2003:19). O.T. Oshadare *et al*, posited that religion as a social factor emphasizes cohesion and collective action among members in a unified system of beliefs and practice relating to sacred things which unite adherents into a single moral community (Oshadare, *et al*, 2005:71).

Religious value systems play very significant role in collective self-awareness and identity, which draw together individuals, families and

regions, and pull them towards greater self-consciousness needed to build and animate a nation from within. However, religion can be manipulated as an instrument of destruction and disintegration, which threatens the peace, stability and security of a nation (Ethel, 2010:26). This is exactly the case in China and Nigeria, in that, religion is being manipulated by the Uyghurs and Boko Haram for the purpose of achieving their aims. This however, culminates into the destruction of lives and properties which has greatly impeded the socio-political and economic development of both countries.

Religious Revival in China

China (officially known as the Republic of China) is a country in East Asia, which has one of the oldest civilization in the world. The name China was given to it by foreigners and it's probably based on the corruption of Qin (pronounced as "chin") a Chinese dynasty that ruled during the 3rd century BC. According to the 2008 estimate, one-fifth of the world's population (1.3 billion people) live in China. Of the country's inhabitants, about 92 percent of these are ethnic Han Chinese. The Han are descendants of people who settled on the plains and plateaus of Northern and Central China more than 5,000 years ago, and of people in Southern China who were absorbed by the Northerners more than 2,000 years ago and gradually adopted a shared culture with them. The remaining 8 percent of China's population consist of minority nationalities, such as: Tibetans, Mongols, Uyghurs, Zhuang, Miao, Yi and many smaller groups, who inhabits the sparsely settled areas of Western and South-Western China. China has one of the largest land mass (measuring about the same size as the United States). Beijing, which is located in the North is China's capital, as well as its cultural, economic and communication centre (Clunas, 2008).

Prior to the Maoist era, the traditional religions of China were Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. People often practiced and adhered to traditions of all three religions as well as incorporating variety of local beliefs into their religious practice. Islam and Christianity were among the more formal and organized religions practiced in China, but these faiths had few adherents. After gaining control in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party officially eliminated

organised religion. The CCP's move received little resistance because Confucianism is largely secular and because most Chinese adhered to aspects of all three major faiths; thus they lacked strong allegiance to any single religion (Clunas, 2008). However, this situation changed following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. The post-Maoist China witnessed the emergence of diverse, encompassing, official, unofficial, underground and folk religions. The catalyst for these was the Chinese constitution of 1982 which allowed citizens freedom of religious belief and protected legitimate religious activities as defined by the state. The growth of religious activities in China can be attributed to modernization. A large body of literatures on modernization suggests that this process could transform and disrupt the existing class structure, ethnic and tribal relations, political power structure, and even the value system religions (Lai, 2003). This was the case in the post-Maoist China, and consequently, people embraced religion because it met their needs for psychological comfort and spiritual fulfilment, especially in confronting a variety of problems inherent in the modernization program, including increasing marketization, rapid social transition and emerging social problems.

The five major officially recognised religions in China include Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. Following recent studies on China's religion, this chapter leaves out Confucianism from the discussion, largely because in present day China it exists primarily in form of ethical teachings, rather than religion *per se*. In 2005, the State Council passed new Regulations on Religious Affairs, which allows state-registered religious organizations to possess property, publish literature, train and approve clergy and collect donations, but religious freedom is still not universal in China (Albert, 2015). All religious activities in China are regulated by the state authority, for instance, the administration of religious affairs, including establishment of official places for worship (mosque, church, and temple, amongst others), training of religious clergy, and management of religious activities such as: membership registration, service organization, and preacher certification (Lai, 2014:6).

Although religious belief in China is protected by the constitution, all evidence of religious restriction proves otherwise. For instance, Article 36 of the constitution states that "citizens of the

People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, or public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion..." (Albert, 2015). Nevertheless, the Chinese government reserves the right to refuse equal protection to any religious group. The Uyghur Muslims are the worst hit by this situation, in that they are treated more unfairly than other Islamic groups in China. The Chinese government tighten their grip on religious activities of the Uyghur Muslims because of their ethnic and religious affiliations with neighbouring Islamic countries whom the Chinese government accuse of supporting religious extremism in the Xinjiang region. This situation, amongst others, is the motivating factor for the religious conflicts that is being perpetrated by the Uyghurs in Xinjiang province of China from the 1990s till date, which culminates in the loss of lives and properties. The Chinese government also carry out military reprisals against the protesting Uyghur Muslims as a way of curtailing their uprising.

Against this backdrop, the preceding paragraphs seek to examine Islamic activism in Xinjiang, as well as, its impact on the socio-political and economic development of China.

The Rise of Islamic Activism in Xinjiang, Uyghur Province of China

The Uyghurs are a Turkic minority Muslim who live primarily in the Xinjiang region of Western China (Corradini, 2010:29). Xinjiang is a Western province that makes up one-sixth of China's landmass with a population of 20 million. It is rich in mineral and natural resources and is home to the Uyghurs, the largest ethnic minority group in the province, with over 8 million people (Gorrie, J). The region now known as Xinjiang came under Chinese rule in the 18th century, when the Qing dynasty conquered the Xinjiang province and incorporated it into China. Uyghur nationalists organized several uprisings against the dynasty, which ruled China until the early 20th century. An East Turkistan State was briefly declared in 1949, but independence was short-lived later that year as Mao Zedong's forces thwarted Uyghur's aspirations by imposing total control over

Xinjiang, setting off protracted tensions that have characterized the Uyghur–State relations till date (Siddiqui, 2013). However, after the death of Mao, the Chinese Constitution of 1982 gave official support to religious freedom of the five official religions in China. Thus, the Uyghur Muslims intensified their religious activities and resumed their clamour for an autonomous state. This was a catalyst for the ethnic, cultural and religious tensions between the Uyghurs and the Chinese leadership. Although article 36 of the Chinese constitution explicitly allows “freedom of religious belief”, the Chinese government continue to put harsh restrictions on Uyghurs. Most Uyghurs are Muslims, and Islam is an important part of their life and identity (BBC News, 26th September 2014). Recent religious revival among the Uyghur population developed through unofficial channels to avoid state control. These unofficial religious organizations are very capable to attract followers and build mobilizing power through underground religious preaching. The records of recent ‘violent incidents’ suggest that many attacks were associated with these underground organizations and networks (Lee, 2014:6). However, a resurgent Islamic cultural and religious identity is a force which China’s officially atheistic government cannot cope with, and this factor has been responsible for the religious crisis between the Uyghurs and the Chinese government from the 1990s till date.

Xinjiang is an area of special concern because of the region’s ethnic and religious ties to neighbouring states. Xinjiang is a “designated autonomous region” in China and it’s also known as East Turkistan, with historical and religious ties to several central Asian nations. In fact, it shares borders with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, as well as with Tibet. Uyghur populations are found in some of these countries who in recent years, has been providing greater levels of support to the Uyghurs’ separatist’s movement in Xinjiang (Albert, 2015). The Uyghurs view China’s presence in Xinjiang as imperialism and identify themselves as belonging to the central Asian Islamic Republic more than they do with China. An independence movement has been in existence since the early 1990s, when Uyghur separatists staged numerous attacks against Chinese rule over the region. In response to those attacks, China maintained a demographic policy in Xinjiang of migrating ethnic Han Chinese

(which is about 22 percent of the Chinese population) as a means of displacing Uyghurs and minimizing their disruptive influence (Gorrie, 1997). The Han Chinese then took up the control of the government in Xinjiang, and this was also part of the grievances of the Uyghurs, who felt sidelined in the politics of their region. The “Uyghur problem” reviewed by China as highly inflammatory since the province borders five Muslim countries with a history of supporting Islamic militants. Since the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, China has increasingly portrayed its Uyghur separatists as auxiliaries of al-Qaeda, saying they have received training in Afghanistan (BBC News, 30th April 2014). Thus, Uyghur Muslims are placed under the watchful eyes of the Chinese government and the United States and many of them are also being arrested.

The Uyghurs are in two groups: those who want an independent Uyghur state and those who realize that it is easier to conform to traditional Chinese culture. This is probably because, the Uyghur youths want to be able to practice their religion without worrying about persecution, but they also believe that going to Chinese schools, wearing traditional Chinese clothing, and living comfortably with Han Chinese in Xinjiang is more acceptable than constantly being targeted by the Chinese government. This situation has undoubtedly reinforced the Chinese government’s efforts to continue its political and cultural pressure on the Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. As more Uyghurs conform to the traditional Chinese way of life, the government believes that its restrictions are working and the Uyghur independence movement is getting smaller (Corradini, 2010:29). However, that is not to say the Chinese government has been able to quell the uprising totally. Religious conflicts characterises East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), who according to the US state Department in 2006, are “the most militant of the ethnic Uyghur separatist groups” (BBC News, 26th September 2014). Although most Uyghurs do not support ETIM, they are frustrated with the Chinese government because they face discrimination for having a different culture than the typically wealthier Han Chinese.

China’s problems with the Uyghurs have culminated into numerous outbreaks of rioting and protracted violence with death tolls in the hundreds. Tensions and instability remain high due to

killings carried out by armed Uyghurs/Muslims, on ethnic Han Chinese in the province, and a meeting of 200 Uyghurs – hosted by Japan – to publicize their demand for independence, which was met with condemnation by China (Gorrie, J). Several terrorist attacks which led to the loss of several lives and properties have been traced to the Uyghurs. For instance, in 2009 following a large scale ethnic rioting in the regional capital, Urumqi, some 200 people were killed and most of them were Han Chinese. Security was increased and many Uyghurs detained as suspects. In June 2012, six Uyghurs reportedly tried to hijack a plane from Hotan to Urumqi before they were overpowered by passengers and crew. There was bloodshed in April 2013 and in June that year, 27 people died in Shanshan County after police opened fire on what state media described as ‘a mob armed with knives attacking local government buildings’. An October 2013 incident where a car plunged into a crowd and burst into flames in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square was blamed on Xinjiang separatists. At least 31 people were killed and more than 90 suffered injuries in May 2014 when two cars crashed through an Urumqi market and explosives were tossed into the crowd. In July, Chinese authorities said a knife-wielding gang attacked a police station and government offices in Yarkant, leaving 96 dead. The Imam of China’s largest mosque, Jume Tahir, was stabbed to death days later. This and many more riots were blamed on the Uyghurs (BBC News 26th September 2014). Although these attacks are tragic, they are attempts by the Uyghurs to seek the religious freedom forbidden by the Chinese government.

The Uyghurs’ religious intransigence is a challenge that Chinese leaders have so far been unable to address successfully, even though it has resorted to drastic measures to quell the rise of Islamic activism. From teachers, force-feeding Muslim children candy during Ramadan, to bans on religious expression throughout Xinjiang, such measures have not produced the desired outcomes, rather, it has only succeeded in provoking more violence in the province and increased separatists’ sentiment. For instance, the ban on fasting of Muslim civil servants in July 2014, was followed by a lot of attacks on the public which was traced to the Uyghur extremists. This situation also worsens China’s relations with Pakistan, which it suspects of supporting Islamic radicalism in the province. China is also trying to

bring the Xinjiang’s orbit closer to Beijing, to quell the unrest of its Islamic population by force, migration and accommodation, but it’s yet to realize success. In fact, it has achieved just the opposite. There is no doubt that as economic conditions continue to deteriorate and Beijing’s oppression of the province escalates, Xinjiang will seek further involvement and deeper ties with its Muslim neighbours and grow more distant from CCP’s authority (Gorrie, J).

It should be noted that, much of the conflicts which were attributed to the Uyghurs might have been highly exaggerated by the Chinese government. This is because the Chinese government is known for its human rights abuses and one cannot ascertain the authenticity of the information that is being dished out to the world by the Chinese government because they control the media. The world only hears China’s side of the story, but there are always two sides to a coin. That notwithstanding, the Uyghurs insurgency has a very devastating effect on the Xinjiang region, as able bodied men who ought to develop the economy are being slaughtered by this Islamic extremists. The destruction of properties made several persons homeless. Also, the resources of China which are supposed to be utilized for the socio-economic development of China are being diverted to quell this uprising.

Religious Revival in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country in West Africa and it is the largest black African country. The Name ‘Nigeria was coined by Flora Shaw (later Flora Lugard). It refers to the people who inhabit the Niger Area. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with about 160 million people cutting across the divides of ethnicity and religious beliefs. Nigeria has three major religions which are: Christianity, Islam and African Religion. These religions, with an exemption of African Religion, proliferated into the country from foreign countries. Christianity for instance, came into the country through the activities of the European missionaries who were on a mission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the inhabitants of Africa which they labelled as a “dark continent”, and in which Nigeria belongs to. On the other hand, Islam (the religion of Prophet Mohammed) proliferated into the area now known as Nigeria from the Middle

East, during the trans-Saharan trade. However, Islam gained much prominence and attracted a lot of adherents in Nigeria as a result of the Sokoto Jihad of 1804 which was championed by Uthman Dan Fodio. Both Christianity and Islam are monotheist religions and the activities of their adherents have impacted in one way or the other the process of nation building in the country.

African religion was the main religion of those living in the present day Nigeria, prior to the coming of the European missionaries. However, modernity has posed acute challenges on traditional religion in Nigeria, and it is gradually going into oblivion in that, it has just few adherents today. This can be attributed to the activities of the European missionaries who viewed African religion as evil and did everything possible to eradicate it. This was done through the preaching of the word of God, and by making people believe that if they died they would go to hell fire if they did not repent and convert to Christianity. The efforts of the missionaries were consolidated by the British colonialists (colonial rule started in 1900 and ended in 1960) who destroyed the shrines of African worshippers and erected churches on those sites. Not only did the British colonialists suppress African religion, they also introduced Western education which in turn helped to erode the African belief systems and customs in Nigeria.

However, after the attainment of independence in 1960, the religious persecution by the colonialists ended and all the three religions were given the right to carry out their religious activities. The monotheistic religions of Islam and Christianity enjoyed special government protection during the post-colonial era. However, each claim superiority over and seek to outdo each other in the unfolding competition in the number of converts and influence in national policies. Both religions also experience internal squabbles between adherents of various denominations or sects. Religious tensions sometimes lead to serious crisis and disruption of public order, which threatens the peace, stability and security of the country (Ehiedu 2010:26). However, the most extreme cases of religious crisis are those perpetrated by the Islamic Sect "Boko Haram". From the 1990s to 2015, the Boko Haram sect carried out terrorist attacks which claimed a lot of lives and properties in Nigeria. Although, the Nigerian government put in place strict security measures to curb the

menace, the situation persists and it has a negative impact on the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria. Against this backdrop, the following paragraphs seek to examine the Rise of Islamic Activism in North-East Nigeria, as well as, its effects on the socio-political and economic development of the country.

The Rise of Islamic Activism in North-East Nigeria

Although, Nigeria has over the years faced a lot of religious crisis, the one caused by the activities of the Islamic sect, Boko Haram, remains quite unique in all ramifications. The Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East geo-political zone of Nigeria, that originally took the form of sectarian religious violence, have escalated into terrorist activities with international linkages and affiliations making it a relatively difficult nut for the Nigerian government to crack (Awortu, 2015:213). The Boko Haram is a dreaded Islamic sect known as "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lid da'awati Wal-Jihad" (Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad) (Shuaibu, *et al*, 2015:254). The Hausa appellation 'Boko Haram' signifies its ideology which forbids Western education and any culture that is Western. Since 1995, the Boko Haram has been operating under the name Shabab Muslim Youth Organization with Mallam Lawal as the leader. However, the leadership of the group shifted to Mallam Mohammed Yusuf, following Mallam Lawal's departure to Saudi Arabia for further studies (Babatunde, *et al*, 2014:61).

Boko Haram grew out of a group of radical Islamic Youths who worshipped at the Al-Haji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, capital of Borno State, in the 1990's. Its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, began as a preacher and leader in the youth wing of Shababul Islam of Ahl-Sunnah, a Salafi group. His literal interpretation of the Quran led him to advocate that aspects of Western education he considered contradictory to the Holy Book be forbidden. While critical of the government, Yusuf was involved in official efforts to introduce and implement Sharia in several Northern states in the early 2000s. The failure to achieve this fully helped to explain Muslim Youths' anger with government deception and insincerity and the call for a full blown Islamic Revolution. Boko

Haram's principal goal is to create a strict Islamic state in the North that it believed would address the ills of society, including corruption and bad governance. Abu Qaqa, the group's best known spokesman, explained that the group's agenda is to destabilize Nigeria and take her back to the pre-colonial period when the Sharia law was practiced (Awortu, 2015:214).

However, the movement did not become militant until 2009 when its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was captured by the men of Nigerian security forces and was later found dead. Consequently, Abubakar Shekau who assumed the leadership of the group, applied a more radical approach to the activities of the group. To buttress this point, BBC online, on 22nd June, 2012, stated that the sect's level of radicalization and terrorism is perhaps, a function of the death of its initial leader and the subsequent clampdown by the state; the taciturn psychopath, Abubakar Shekau, a Kanuri native who once boasted "I enjoy killing any one that Allah commands me to kill the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams". Gilbert posited that the new leadership turned to the use of lethal weapons such as rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), anti-tank missiles, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), surface-to-air missiles, armoured tanks, A K 47s as well as machetes and daggers for the purpose of meting out mayhem to the Nigerian state, which adversely affects her economy considering the high rate of loss of lives and properties (Awortu, 2015:214).

Although the Boko Haram insurgency is a religious crisis, it also has some level of socio-economic and political undertone. Considering the high level of poverty in Nigeria, it can be rightly asserted that the Boko Haram menace emerged as a result of poverty in the North. Nigeria is naturally endowed with mineral resources and naturally blessed with fertile land that is good for both cash and food crops and its high potential for industrial and economic development. The discovery of crude oil is an additional advantage to the country as it serves as her major foreign exchange income making Nigeria the sixth largest oil producing country in the world. However, despite Nigeria's huge resource endowment, majority of her population wallow in abject poverty (Onuoha, *et al*, 2015). For instance, many Nigerian citizens are living below the poverty line of \$1 a day. Statistically, poverty distribution in Nigeria shows that

Northern Nigeria is worst hit by this situation. For instance, North Central records 67%, North West records 71.1% and North East records 72.2%. Thus, it is not out of turn to say that the high level of poverty in the North-East, gave rise to the Boko Haram insurgency in the region. The Boko Haram sect attributes the high level of poverty in the North-East to the Nigerian government who imposed Western education on them and failed to manage the resources of the country to their benefits. Thus, in their view "Western Education is a sin". To support this claim, Ahokegh, observed that "if one thinks deeply about the rejection of Western education by this Islamist group, a sense will be deduced. Western education and Christianity were introduced forcefully in Nigeria through colonialism as instruments of economic exploitation and socio-cultural transformation. Since the exit of colonialism in Nigeria, the citizens continue to suffer its legacies of economic exploitation and socio-cultural transformation through the existence of an indigenous exploiting class". Thus, the resentment of the Boko Haram sect against the corrupt elites who are products of Western education became the foundation of the Boko Haram insurgency (Ahokegh, F).

Furthermore, the Boko Haram sect took advantage of the Nigerian government's inability to provide basic welfare schemes to criticize Western education and drum up support for their false Islamic teachings. They exploited the lacuna created by the high level of unemployment, non-availability of basic infrastructure and the general high poverty level in the area to their benefit through the strategy of providing some welfare package to the citizenry. For instance, they used food and employment to attract youths to their fold and created the impression that their fundamental Islamic viewpoint of society organization is better than the Western capitalist mode of production (Awortu, 2015:215). These strategy paid dividends, in that, the Boko Haram gained the support of youths whom they recruited as suicide bombers and fighters.

Another catalyst for the rise in the Islamic activism of the Boko Haram sect is the inability of Northern politicians (who used the sect to achieve their selfish goals) to keep to their own side of the bargain. There were attacks and counter attacks by political supporters which gradually resulted in divisions within the sect. The death of Mohammed Yusuf provided an impetus for those opposed to his

non violent approach to use their proposed violent approach to achieve their aims. It should be noted that, the death of Yaqut gave rise to different violent sect groups who constructed "a state within a state" with a cabinet and its own religious police, and attracted more and more people. Most of those attracted by the group are refugees from the wars over border in Chad and jobless Nigerian Youth domiciled in Northern Nigeria, as well as other Islamic sects in the Middle-East who gives technical, moral and financial support to them.

The Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for several terrorist attacks which claimed a lot of lives and properties, and attracted the attention of the international community. From the year, 2009 till date, the Boko Haram in pursuit of their ideology, engage in arson, kidnap, bombing and sporadic shooting with disdain and impunity targeting important national events, public institutions, markets, churches and even mosques. Since 2009, Boko Haram has constituted a serious security threat in the Northern part of Nigeria. However, until June 16, 2011, the onslaught was restricted to the North-East geo-political zone. The first attack outside the zone was the bombing of the Nigerian Police Headquarters in Abuja. This attack was triggered off by the utterances of Hafiz Ringim, the then Inspector General of Police who threatened to smoke Boko Haram out in a press statement on his duty tour in Maiduguri, where the sect launched an attack. The attack on the Police Headquarters was followed up with the bombing of the United Nations Office in Abuja on 26th August, 2011 (Babatunde, *et al*, 2014:61). These and many more attacks which were carried out by the Boko Haram sect, has an adverse effect on the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria. Since stepping up its activities in 2009, the group has killed over 18,000 people and displaced about 1.5 million people. Killings by Boko Haram since 2009 are largely responsible for Nigeria's decline from 7th of 115 countries in 2012 to 4th of 121 countries in 2014 in the Global Terrorism Index (Onuoha, 2015).

From the forgoing discussion, it is clear that China and Nigeria have been experiencing a lot of religious conflicts which have destabilized the socio-political and economic landscape of both countries. At this juncture, therefore, it is imperative to briefly juxtapose the activities of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang Province of China, with the activities of the Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria.

Firstly, both the Uyghurs and the Boko Haram, adopt Islamic activism to achieve their aims. Secondly, while the Uyghurs are fighting for religious recognition and the establishment of an autonomous state, the Boko Haram are fighting for the establishment of an Islamic state that is free from Western influence. Thirdly, both the Uyghurs and the Boko Haram sect adopts guerrilla tactics to further their cause; they make use of weapons of mass destruction which leads to the destruction of lives and properties in both countries; and they carry out their arson and bombings in public places which culminates in heavy casualty.

Fourthly, both sects get moral and financial support from neighbouring Islamic countries, especially from the Middle East, as a result of their ethnic and religious affiliations with those countries. Also, these Islamic countries gladly give their support to Islamic insurgents all over the world because of their anti-West posture. Lastly, while the Boko Haram claim responsibility for their actions, the Uyghurs don't.

Linkages of religious conflicts on the Socio-Political and Economic Development of China and Nigeria

There is no gainsaying that the activities of the Uyghurs and Boko-Haram from the 1990s till date, have greatly impeded the process of modernization and nation building in China and Nigeria, in that, it has dealt a big blow on the socio-political and economic development of both countries. In the social spheres, the activities of the Uyghurs and Boko Haram leads to palpable fear among the citizenry and high sense of insecurity due to regular loss of life and damage of properties and infrastructures on account of bombings

and reported cases of assassination. Many people are displaced as a result of this crisis and they become refugees in other communities. In Nigeria for instance, the Nigerian government established camps for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who lost all they had during the Boko Haram destruction. There is no doubt that the migrants will put additional pressure on the host communities in terms of infrastructure usage and might also act as security threat to their host communities. Also, the psychological effect of this crisis cannot be underestimated. The survivors of those attacks are always traumatised as a result of the shock which they experienced, as well as the pain of seeing people being blown into pieces by bombs.

Economically, the religious conflicts in China and Nigeria have a lot of negative impacts on the development of both countries. In the first instance, some of the able bodied men and women, as well as intellectuals who are supposed to help in the development of the economy of both countries are being murdered by the day. Also, the resources which are supposed to be utilized for the development of both countries are being diverted towards solving the menace of this religious insurgency. The destruction of government properties makes it impossible for development to take place in those regions because the more the government put in place infrastructural facilities, the more it gets damaged. Furthermore, the Islamic activism of the Uyghurs and Boko Haram in Xinjiang, China and North East Nigeria scare away investors who could have invested in key areas of the economy (since no investor prefer to invest in a crisis ridden nation). In Nigeria for instance, most of the foreign investors are scared of investing in the country because they believe they might lose their investments to the attacks of the Boko Haram terrorists, as well as their lives. The curfews which are imposed by the government as a result of the incessant terrorist attacks, prevents people from going about their daily activities, therefore, causing a decline in economic development of this regions.

Politically, the insecurity situations in Xinjiang, China and North East Nigeria have dented the image of both countries in the international arena, in that people are scared of travelling to these regions for fear of death. Also, it has helped to worsen the diplomatic relationship between the government of these regions and their international counterparts. For instance, most foreign countries view

all Nigerians as terrorist and they treat them as such. Nigerians are always subjected to strict security checks whenever they are travelling to other countries. Also, the Chinese government accuse some neighbouring countries of supporting Islamic activism in Xinjiang, and this situation has worsened China's relationship with those countries. It is imperative to note that, in Nigeria, some greedy politicians make use of the Boko Haram sect for the selfish interest and they also provide financial support for the sect. This factor is responsible for the inability of the Nigerian government to be able to properly quell this insurgency, thereby, making them look incompetent.

It is imperative to stress that one of the factors responsible for the inability of the Nigerian government to put an end to the Boko Haram insurgency is corruption. Most of the officers, who are charged with the responsibility of purchasing arms and ammunitions for the military, use the situation as conduit pipe for fraud and misappropriation of fund. They siphon the money meant for the purchase of arms, and purchase cheap and substandard weapons which cannot match the sophisticated weapons being used by the Boko-Haram sect (Egana, 2015)

All the aforementioned salient issues are the socio-political and economic impact of the religious crisis of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China and the Boko Haram of North-East Nigeria, on the development of China and Nigeria. Although, the Chinese and Nigerian governments have tried their best to suppress these uprising, the situation persists till date. However, if this scourge is not checkmated, it will have a devastating effect on the economy of both countries.

Conclusion

From the forgoing discussion we can deduce that, religious conflicts in China and Nigeria was a "frustration aggression hypothesis" on account of religious restrictions and the influence of Western education in China and Nigeria respectively. In view of this, rather than religion being used as an instrument of socio-political and economic development in China and Nigeria, it was manipulated by the Uyghurs and Boko Haram as an instrument of destruction and

deintegration, which threatened the peace, stability and security of both countries from the 1990s up till 2015. This chapter asserted that religious conflicts in China and Nigeria can be attributed to ethnic rivalry, religious bigotry and poverty and these has greatly impeded the socio-political and economic development of both countries. This crisis which culminates in the loss of lives and properties is the bane of underdevelopment in Xinjiang, Uyghur province in China and North-East Nigeria, in that, no sustainable development can thrive in a crisis ridden environment. Despite the measures put in place by the Chinese and Nigerian governments to curtail this crisis, the situation persists and if no concrete measure is put in place to revamp this situation, the crisis will act as a canker worm that will eat deep into the fabrics of the national economies of both countries. It is instructive to stress that, the current high level of religious crisis in China and Nigeria is not insurmountable. The situation can be revamped if the governments of both countries adopt the following recommendations:

Firstly, the government of the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Nigeria should extend their bilateral relations to include security cooperation, so that both countries can consolidate their efforts in the fight against insurgency and insecurity in China and Nigeria, so as to achieve quick and concrete result, since "two good heads are better than one". Also, they should put in place pro-active security measures that will help to eradicate this menace once and for all.

Secondly, the Chinese and Nigerian governments should put in place measures that will help to improve the standard of living of their citizens. Poverty has been attributed to be one of the causes of ethno-religious crisis, since "a hungry man is an angry man". Therefore, the governments of both countries should look for ways to eradicate poverty and create employment opportunities for the youths because an "idle mind is the devil's workshop".

Thirdly, religious leaders should stop the wrong interpretation of religious texts and Holy Books, so as not to spark up excessive patriotism, which in turn culminate into religious extremism. Also, religious leaders should preach religious tolerance to their adherents so that they can live peacefully amongst themselves.

Fourthly, the government of both countries should create a forum for the leadership of the various religions to meet and discuss ways in which religious crisis can be abated and propose ways in which all the various religions can live peacefully amongst themselves. Furthermore, the Chinese government should try and improve their human rights record and grant the Uyghurs more participation in the government of their region, as well as religious freedom. Also, the Nigerian government should always pay close attention to security issues in the country, because if they had tackled the Boko Haram menace before it escalated, the country wouldn't have experienced incessant killings and destruction of properties.

Lastly, all culprits must be severely punished to act as deterrents to others irrespective of their societal status. In Nigeria, corrupt public officials who are involved in corruption and politicians who are sponsors of the Boko Haram sect should be punished, so as to rid the country of those who are agents of underdevelopment and security threats.

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